

# Biosphere – Environment Museum

Some World's Fair buildings have continued to function long after the rest of the fair has become a distant memory. Among the best known are the Eiffel Tower of the Exposition Universelle of 1889 in Paris, the Atomium from Expo 58 in Brussels, The Space Needle observation tower from the 1962 World's Fair in Seattle, Washington and the iconic U.S.A. pavilion at Expo 67 in Montreal at Parc Jean-Drapeau on Saint Helen's Island.

by Judy Colbert  
Photos: iStockphoto.com

➔ The eye-catching geodesic dome was designed by architect Richard Buckminster "Bucky" Fuller (1895-1983), and was an enclosed steel dome with 1900 acrylic panels – 76 meters (250 ft) wide and 62 meters (200 ft) high. It is technically called a Class 1, Frequency 16 Icosahedron. You may have seen the dome in the original *Battlestar Galactica* TV series in 1978 and Robert Altman's movie *Quintet*. It was also in the animated *Jacob-Two Two* TV series (the building was used by a bunch of senior citizens who were going to knit a large tea cozy to cover the city of Montreal).

## THE BIG BUBBLE

The building originally had a transparent acrylic bubble and a complex system of shades used to control the temperature inside the dome. The dome gave the impression (and still does) that the filigree creation is weightless, ready to take off at any moment, similar to a soap bubble sailing into the blue sky. Exhibits were set up on seven levels, and a monorail ran through the pavilion. Nine million people toured the dome during the fair's six-month lifespan that had the theme "Man and His World."

A 1976 fire destroyed the acrylic bubble, but the structure remained. After sitting unused for almost 15 years, Environment Canada bought the building and the site in the fall of 1990. By 1995, they had turned it into an interactive water museum that lets you explore the Great Lakes and the Saint Lawrence River ecosystems. Now, nearly 50 years since the building made its spectacular debut, there's still a thrill when it comes into view. It's a feeling of science fiction that's really fact.

## ENVIRONMENT MUSEUM

The Biosphère Environment Museum—the only environment museum in North America—presents displays about environmental issues regarding meteorology, climate change, water, air, eco-technologies and sustainable development.

Among the entertaining and educational permanent and temporary displays you might see, is an impressive exhibit, "Design the Future," and giant outdoor photographs of the Arctic to help introduce what scientists know now and what we still need to know for our future. Other exhibits are "+1 Degree Celsius: What Difference Does it Make?" and "Spaceship Earth" an exhibit demonstrating Bucky Fuller's vision for sustainable development.

Perhaps the most exciting part is a big model of the 1,900 miles (3,058 kilometers) of the St. Lawrence River that connects the Great Lakes (the world's largest freshwater lake system) with the Atlantic Ocean. This study of limnology, including shipping, tourism, water supply, and hydroelectric power, shows the effects they have on the waterway and our lives. Games and interactive displays are an integral part of the fun and learning and are geared for all ages.

## HOW TO GET IN?

The museum is wheelchair user accessible and open daily between June 1 and early September from 10 am to 5 pm. From mid-January through the end of May, the museum is open Thursday through Sunday from 10 am to 5 pm (last admission is 4:15); it's closed on legal holidays. Admission is charged for everyone 18 and older. A discount is available for visitors with a Montréal Museums Pass, Accès Montréal card or Cultural Access Pass. The Biosphère is accessible by metro (Jean-Drapeau station). Find out more at [www.biosphere.ec.gc.ca](http://www.biosphere.ec.gc.ca). ❖



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**WOW** Starting in May 2016 WOW air will fly four-five times a week from Europe to Montréal, Canada all year round. Find available connections to Montréal or Toronto from most of WOW air's European destinations at [wowair.com](http://wowair.com).

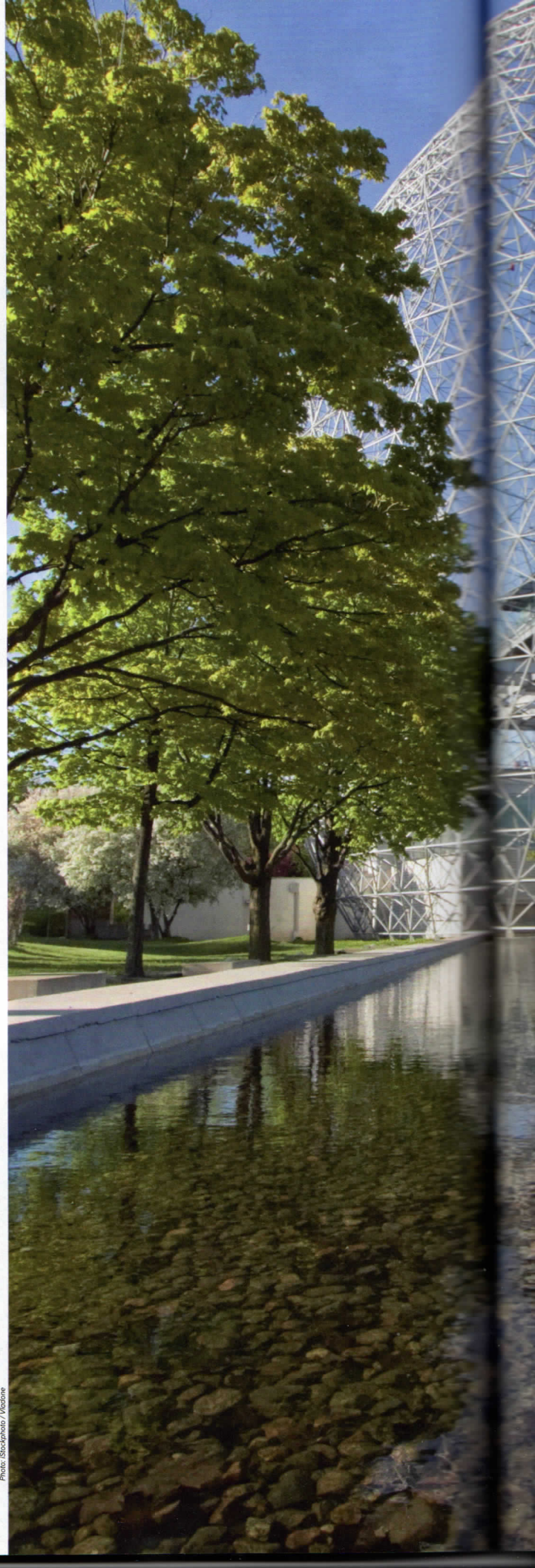
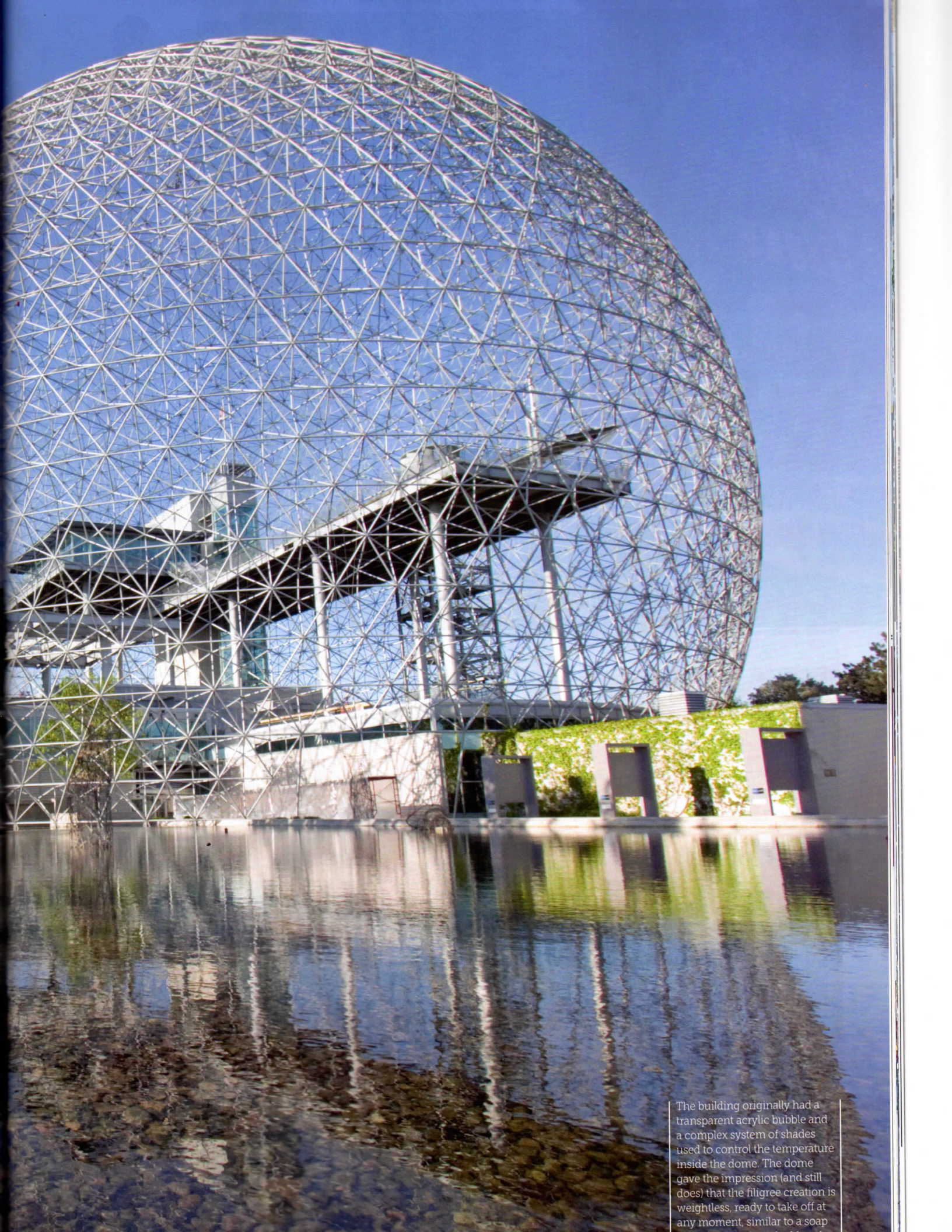


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